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The clans are of basic importance. They are the largest units of solidarity, and open conflict never occurs within them, as it would not between a man's clan and his wife's and mother's clan. It is through his clan that a man establishes his totemic relations and identifies himself with the sacred world by virtue of a mystical experience of his father. The mother is supposed to be spiritually fertilized by the entrance into her uterus of the infant's soul when it has come from the child's father's totemic well. Many ethnologists have insisted that the Australian aborigines have no knowledge of physiological conception. Although I held this opinion during the first part of my field work, I later came to the conclusion that knowledge of procreation is general to the Murngin but is considered of little importance.[4]

The blood feud is forever present and tends to kill a sufficient number of young men to allow the system of polygyny[5] to function. The Murngin have developed a number of well-constructed types of warfare which form dramatic episodes in the several chains of feuds linking the dead generations of the past to those of the living.

The moiety[5] is a still larger unit than the clan, dividing the sixty-odd clans into two groups which intermarry. By the device of the moiety, the whole of the life of the Murngin, as well as nature, is placed in two opposing groups called Yiritja and Dua.

A final important structure in Murngin society is the age-grading[5] institution. It divides, first, the men from the women (see page 131, Age Grading) on the basis of those who are initiated into the mysteries and those who are not, and then redivides the men on an age-graded scale based primarily on the place a man achieves within the rest of his social organization through *rites de passage*.

Within this social configuration the life of each Murngin male goes through an exact cycle. The first life crisis occurs when the Murngin soul, through the father's mystic experience, leaves the totemic well and enters the womb of the mother. By circumcision around the age of six to eight years the individual passes from the social status of a woman to that of a man. When at about the age of eighteen he achieves parenthood and is shown his totems for the first time, he goes to another, higher status; and to a still higher when, at about thirty-five, he sees the high totems. At death he passes through a very elaborate mortuary rite, returns to his totemic well, and the circle is complete. The personality before birth is purely spiritual; it becomes almost completely profane or unspiritual in the earlier period of its

[4] See pages 23-25.
[5] See Glossary of Technical Terms.

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Liaalaomir clan on the Glyde River. Here was enacted the great drama of the Rock Python swallowing the two Creator Sisters which has tremendous import in ceremonial and mythological activity.[10] Even the men will not stay on or near this spot at night. The Gunabibi ceremony, although an enactment of this great event, is not conducted here for fear of disturbing the peace of the great father snake, thus causing him once again to come out of his subterranean depths and swallow those who have angered him.

All clan totems are thought to lie below the clan water hole in the subterranean waters. Here too will be found the old mythological ancestors who lived in the time of the activities of the totems on earth in the great mythological days when the world was made and named. When a ranga (higher totemic emblem) has been made by the men of the clan for a ceremony and has been used during the night time, it is put back into the mud of the water hole so that the .wongar (spirit of the totem) which is felt to be in the emblem may return to the well.

When a child is born it comes from this well as a spirit. In the well it has the appearance of a very small fish. The spirit comes to the father who is to be, and asks for its mother so that it may be born. The father points out the mother and the spirit child enters her vagina. This happens while the father is dreaming; or when he is out hunting he may notice something peculiar about the actions of an animal or bird which will lead him to the conclusion that his wife is going to have a child.

My informant arrived one morning obviously anxious to talk:

I had a nice dream the other night. I dreamed that a boy child walked past all the other humpies [Australian white term for native huts] in the camp and kept coming until he got to my house. He beat on the bark wall. He called out, "Father! Father! Where are you?"

"Here I am."

"Where is mother?"

I told him and wakened up. I thought to myself, "True." Yesterday I went fishing with my wife at the creek. I went up one side of the creek and she went up the other. By and by a bream fish came up and took her hook. He came up to it easily and quietly. My wife did not have to pull on the line, for he came in to her like he wanted to. My mielk [woman] was standing in the water only up to her ankles. He came up to her even though she was in the shallow water. Then he stopped quickly, shook

[10] See Chapter IX for a detailed description of the myth and ceremonies centered around this totemic well.

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787 himself against her leg, broke the line, and went back into the deep water. We did not see him again. I came across to her; I said, "What was that?" 825 She said, "A bream fish." I said, "What did he do?" She told me. She said, "My father went fishing like this when my little brother was born; I think 842 this fish shook against my leg for that.' I said, "Oh you know that." "Yes." "You remember my dream I told you about?" She said, "Yes, that's what I think. I won't menstruate any longer now because that baby fish is inside me."

A man from another clan told me this story:

My brothers and I took a dugout canoe and went fishing. We went a long way that day. It was dark when we came back. When we passed the long sand beach on Rabuma Island a turtle came out of the sea and looked at me. I heard him splash the water. It was dark and I was afraid. I said, "What's that?" I heard nothing then. We went on. We paddled slowly, for it was very late, and we were very tired. I heard something go "Wah!" I said, "What is that one?"—That turtle looked at me. All the men heard me call out.—We went on. The tide came in. The moon was still up. The Big Star came out. No light yet. We paddled slowly. Pretty soon that fellow came out again. He looked at me. It was light now, the birds had started to sing.—We were home. I left my canoe and went to my camp. This one followed me [the informant pointed to his third and last child, a small girl]. She had been in the canoe all the time, but I didn't know her.

I went to sleep. I dreamed she came to me. I went to the mainland next day. Wilkdjungo's mother saw my younger wife. A child had been sucking her breast. It had left a wet spot on the nipple. The old woman said, "That one will have a child soon."

I came home and quarreled with this wife. My other wife said, "Don't fight with her. She is going to have a baby." I stopped scolding. She was too young to know that a baby was inside her when I came from where the turtle had followed me and this baby had come home with me from that narra well.

775 If the child should die as a baby it would go back to the well, stay awhile and then return to the same mother. Narnarngo's wife's baby died. The baby went back to its waterhole to become a fish again for a little while and stay beside its wongar.

775 Narnarngo walked by his water hole. He had just killed a dugong. 787 When he slept that night he dreamed that the child's marikmo (father's father) came to him and said, "I'm bringing my maraitcha [son's son] back to you." Soon the child was born. Everyone knew

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that it was the same baby because of the child's resemblance to the one that had died, which proved that the father's dream was true.

In 1898 Spencer and Gillen published their book, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, in which they declare, "We have amongst the Arunta, Luritcha and Ilparra tribes, and probably also among others, such as the Warramunga, the idea firmly held that the child is not the direct result of intercourse, that it may come without this, which merely, as it were, prepares the mother for the reception and birth also of an already formed spirit child who inhabits one of the local totem centers. Time after time we have questioned them on this point and always received the reply that the child was not the direct result of intercourse." This is in reference to the opinion that among the natives of central and northern Australia there is no knowledge of physiological conception and that they believe impregnation of a woman to be entirely due to spiritual causes. Spencer and Gillen rather insisted on this fact because many of the whites of Australia believe that the natives practice the rite of subincision in the attempt to prevent conception. This operation is found throughout a large part of Australia; Spencer and Gillen rightly point out that it has nothing to do with birth control practices.

I was in very intimate contact with the Murngin natives. During my first eight or nine months among them I was firmly convinced that the people had no understanding of physiological conception and believed in the spiritual impregnation of a woman by a totemic child spirit. All the fathers told me their children had come to them in dreams as totemic souls, or in some extra-mundane experience, and asked that their mothers be pointed out to them. The men had complied with the request of the children, who had entered the vaginas of the mothers. During all this time, although I was in constant relationship with a large number of the men and there was practically no taboo on our conversations, which were of the most intimate nature, I could find no indication of any knowledge whatsoever of physiological conception; yet in the study I was making of the people, while looking at the problem from the point of view of the "total situation," that is, considering the whole of the culture, there were strong indications that the natives understood the true nature of the father's physical function.

The second time I entered the area I determined to go into this matter further, since the people I studied were but an extension of the central tribes on which Spencer and Gillen had reported. An occasion

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123 arose in which I could inquire directly of certain old men just what
842 the semen did when it entered the uterus of a woman. They all looked
114 at me with much contempt for my ignorance and informed me that "that was what made babies." I had not been able to obtain this information earlier because the ordinary savage is far more interested in the child's spiritual conception, which determines its place in the social life of the people, than he is in the physiological mechanism of conception. He would far rather talk about ritual and myth than about ordinary mundane affairs. The relationship between the primitive men of northeastern Arnhem Land and me as a field worker would be the same as that between the colonial Puritans of Massachusetts and the traditional visitor from Mars. Had the latter asked Cotton Mather or any other member of the community "where babies came from," he would have discovered that they came from heaven, that God sent them, and that it was the special duty of the church to look out for them. He might have been told that the stork brought them, and discovered totemic "spiritual conception." He would have been told this for approximately the same reason that the ordinary anthropological field investigator is informed by the natives that the totemic spirit is what causes impregnation.

I know it is dangerous to assume that, because the tribes I studied knew about physiological conception, the people Spencer and Gillen investigated had similar knowledge. I do feel, though, the necessity of throwing doubt upon the validity of the conclusions reached by Spencer and Gillen and others who claim there is no knowledge of physiological conception among certain savage tribes. I think that possibly this knowledge does exist but is not considered important, the spiritual conception of the child looming so large in native thinking that the field worker obtains nothing but facts concerning the latter.[11]

715 When a man dies he goes straight to his narra well. He is taken there by his marikmo (paternal grandfather). He never comes back
763 but always remains a spirit. Usually a Murngin who is about to die,
535 particularly if severely wounded in a spear fight, dances his death dance, which is symbolical of the ceremonial actions of his totem. This is to send his spirit back to his ranga well.

"We can drink that narra water; we can see the bottom of the well.

[11] This point perhaps has been labored by me, but a large number of sociological and anthropological theories have been built out of the idea that there are many savage peoples who are ignorant of the facts of procreation. It is time some check be placed upon such speculation until further proof is accumulated by field workers.

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groups (except, of course, ego's father with ego's mother and ego with his wife). The membership of each family is the same as in Euro-American families and includes the same members as found here, the only difference being that a man can have a number of wives, which means in Murngin society that the children have a number of mothers. The sister is not only sexually taboo to her brothers, but any direct contact with her is also taboo. The incest idea is enlarged upon to include these additional restrictions in the general behavior of the opposite sexes of one generation within the family. This extreme form of the incest taboo in the total behavior of brothers and sisters, expressed overtly in concrete negative acts (avoidance), contributes to the organization of the family of orientation. The avoidance rules become concrete symbols of the underlying rule of incest which forces marriage outside the family of orientation and thereby creates the family of procreation out of extra-familial personalities.

The father-son reciprocal is the solid bond around which ego's spiritual affiliations are organized, since by a mystical experience of his father he leaves the totem well as a tiny fish and is directed by his male parent into his mother's womb. The father's mystical experience is the expression of the creation of the family of procreation. It is in fact the first element in the filio-parental relationship, since it is the first moment when either parent is supposed to know the beginning of this new generation within his own family. The annunciation of the child to the father by a dream symbolizes the parents' sexual intercourse, and in Murngin thought both dream and intercourse are necessary for conception and birth.

This first spiritual bond built on the father-son reciprocal determines the child's place in the totemic ceremonies which are of major import in his adult life: his whole spiritual identity, including his totem and power names; his sacred well where his soul will return after death; and the dogma and ritual which surround all these spiritual entities. So much for the orientating relations of ego's generation and that of his parents. Within his own generation and his family of orientation his brothers and sisters are to be found. His brothers and he occupy an identical place within the social structure. They are in the same patrilineal line as he and enjoy the same solidarity with the father as he, the primary differentiating factor being the distinction between older and younger brothers, as expressed in the kinship terminology. The brothers are spiritually almost identical, since they have the same

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593 602 father; frequently, because of the opportunities of competition for women among distant groups, there are actual animosity and warfare.

Since older and younger brothers are clearly differentiated by separate terms, wawa and yukiyuko, and have a definitely regulated behavior toward each other, the relationship of bapa and his sons must be considered from this point of view. Does a father distinguish between older and younger sons, even though there is no term to express these functional differences and all sons are gatu? The answer is decidedly in the affirmative, as will be seen below from the chronologically ordered account of the normal relationship from the period before birth of the son until the death of both father and son.

262 When a "married" man has no children, he must observe a number of food taboos until a wife announces pregnancy. He cannot eat, whether he or another kills or gathers them, porcupine, emu eggs, snake eggs, iguana eggs, turkey eggs, crayfish, large barrimundi, or [851] crabs, until he acquires the right by old age. A child's birth removes all these taboos, but the child must be his, not a brother's.

781 The ideas surrounding birth give the father a prominent part in the procedure. The various spirits of the unborn and the dead live with • 842 the clan totems in the clan wells. As stated, a father dreams that the 843 child comes to him, asking where it can find its mother, and enters the mother's vagina. The next day the man informs the wife that she is going to have a child, or, if it is his first child, to test the value of his dream he may keep it a secret. The natives believe these dreams are always true since a wife usually tells her husband a few days later that she has felt the movements of a child within her. The husband knows then that his dream is true. He sharpens his spears, rewraps his [771] spear-thrower, and prepares to go hunting, for he knows that he will be successful because his child has come from the totemic spirits within the water, bringing good luck with it. He kills an abundance [262] of game and brings it home. A slight ceremony takes place, after which he may eat all food, for, according to Murngin thought his wife having conceived, he is now a father. This removal of taboos on his diet furnishes one of the reasons for a man's eagerness to have children.

781 A child comes from its father's well on the father's clan territory, 842 for clan descent is patrilineal. Sometimes the father may be in another part of the country and may dream that the child came from the well of the local clan. Then it would inherit not only its own clan's totems, but also those of the other, yet it would be a member only of his father's clan. The second water hole must belong to the same moiety

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as his father's; for a father to be Yiritja and the son Dua would be impossible. No man has ever dreamed such an unorthodox concept—either because the moiety idea is such a complete part of Murngin thought that their dreams conform to it, or the men who have such dreams place no importance upon them and forget or suppress them. At all events, a child, male or female, ordinarily inherits only its father's clan and totems, and occasionally inherits in addition totems of another clan. Further, the dream clearly demonstrates a sociological connection between father and child even before birth. The author has recorded no birth without the dream.

Sometimes a man steals another's wife while she is pregnant. The child when born is considered a member of the new man's clan; when he becomes older he usually returns to his own father's clan and identifies himself with it, although he may have strong attachments to his second father's group.

All this indicates that patrilineal inheritance is from the actual father and his group, and not from a different clan, though of the same moiety; it also shows the importance of the actual father in Murngin thought.

Several informants volunteered that a man must abstain from the tabooed foods until he has had a child, because the release from the taboo made him quiet and settled so he would stop running after other women and would stay in one place to take care of his wives, children, and parents-in-law. The social implications of this are very important. By becoming a father he has finally become a husband; he has extended his patrilineal line descendingly and thereby strengthened his own family; and, third, he has, also through this child, strengthened his relationship to his wife's brother, to gawel (father-in-law), mokul (mother-in-law), and marelker (mother-in-law's brother). For, instead of only one direct reciprocal relation, he now has an additional indirect reciprocation with each. His son (or daughter) calls his wife's brothers "gawel" and has a strong bond of mutual aid and obligation with them. His son calls ego's mother-in-law "mari" and has a strong untabooed attachment to her; and to marelker the son also has a strong emotional relationship because ego's marelker is mari to the son. The creation of these social personalities shows the enormous addition to one's kinship personality through the birth of a son, who strengthens ego's position, adding to his security within the clan, the tribe, and with other tribes.

On the other hand, the birth of a daughter is of equal importance.

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totemic lore, with the associated myths and rituals, are dependent upon how far he has been initiated into the sacred mysteries. The initiations elevate him from a lower and more profane existence to a higher and more sacred plane and mark his transition from one age grade to a higher and older one. Age grading, then, controls the degree of sacred participation a man has within the community.

The older men are the final repositories of all the sacred knowledge which can be obtained only by their willingness to initiate the younger men of the lower ranks into their own group. The older men, therefore, by virtue of the age-grade system, control the younger men fairly effectively. It is partly through the exercise of the sanction of refusing to allow a man to be initiated into certain ceremonies, or threatening to do so, that they can maintain the effectiveness of Murngin gerontocracy. In addition, the old men, felt to be in closer touch with the clan ancestors and totems through their deeper participation in the sacred myths and rituals, effect discipline by invoking the religious sanctions: dire things will happen to men who commit acts the old men frown on and which offend the totemic spirits and ancient ancestors. For example, a man who starts a fight or who commits adultery during a ceremony may be told that his real ancestors and his totemic ancestors will not allow the totemic fish soul to enter his wife, she will be childless—a thing all Murngin men would make every effort to avoid. The offending young man may also be told that the totemic ancestors will not come to direct him to his totemic water hole if he is killed in a fight, or that they will refuse to answer him in a time of need, as when he is in a fight or drowning.

The first effective age grading in the lives of the Murngin occurs when the entire group is sexually bifurcated. The young boy is circumcised and immediately enters the portals of a sacred realm which is forever taboo to his sister, promised wives, and the entire female population of a tribe. The pidgin-English expression found generally among Australian aborigines, "make him a young man," describes what takes place in the minds of the natives: that is, the boy is taken out of the social status of female and put in the social category of male by the use of certain rites of passage. His later initiations take him spiritually further and further from his original profane innocence of the uncircumcised child, where sociologically he is treated as a woman, and they translate him grade by grade into the group's mysteries. The young girl grows into womanhood and continues in the ordinary world with only an outsider's knowledge of the mysteries

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852 when he is after those two Wongar women." When "Rain Cloud"
796 was sung the leader said to me, "Those two women are trying to
773 stop that rain because it is coming like a flood and trying to cover
533 them up, it is all the same as if they were being swallowed by a snake."—"Those women are trying to sing to stop the rain but they are only making sounds" (that is, they are having no effect on the rain or snake)—also a comment when "Cloud in the Sky" was sung. —After the completion of this cycle, the leader said to me, "No man made these songs. Those two women made them to keep the two lines [Yiritja and Dua moieties] sacred—to keep marriage straight."

852 The singing of the real and mythological ancestors' names is much
796 more significant than merely recalling the names of the dead, for the
775 souls of the dead are believed to be within the totemic trumpet itself (and within Mandelprindi and Yermerlindi in the Gunabibi ceremony and Uvar in the Ulmark ceremony). "When we have Djungguan, Gunabibi and other corroborees we men tell the women when a man is dead [recently died] that he has come back because that Djungguan has been named his big name [totemic name]. All the men believe he has come back and that all the souls of the dead on that side [moiety reference] are in the ranga [totemic emblem]. If my older brother should die, next Narra or Djungguan we have, he would come back and go in that ranga. That is why we get angry when someone does a bad thing [unsanctioned sexual relation, open fighting, and the like] when we have a Narra or Djungguan. We must stop that corroboree and throw the ritual string away because our old marikmos and maris and kutaras [et cetera] get angry with us and make us sick.
● [942] The little babies when they are fish [unborn] live in the same place with marikmo and mari souls. That marikmo and mari watch us. If we are good, and we don't steal, or have other men's wives, he sends us fish to our wives." "You can't see that spirit when it comes back but you can see it in a dream. That man can be Yiritja or Dua. The man who has dreamed goes to the leader and says that so-and-so has come back, and that he says he has come to look at his children and to bring Yurlunggur. That leader asks the man which way the man in the dream said to make Yurlunggur for this next time, because he knows the man understands from this dream." This dream can come before or at the same time as the ceremony and the power name of the returning dead man can be given to the trumpet. Even though "spirits go to the islands of the dead,[14] or the whale takes them to the

[14] See Myths, Baraumbir and the Island of the Dead, pages 524-528.

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APPENDIX IV

DREAMS

Dreams are always related to the extraordinary in Murngin experience. They are never expressive of the ordinary round of events but are definitely placed in the category of the supernatural. It is believed that when a man dreams his soul is moving about over the country away from the body and observing what is going on elsewhere. If, for example, he dreams of a fight in a distant country he believes the soul has been watching this fight in the far-distant country and reporting to his body what has happened. The various experiences that the man dreams are supposed to be those which his soul has been going through during his sleeping hours. During the hot afternoon the men frequently sleep in the shade, and if it becomes necessary to waken one of them, this is never done hurriedly but with great gentleness and care for fear that the soul will not have time to return to the body.

The soul, during these extra-corporeal experiences, is in a world where the totems, the unborn totemic children, and other extra-mundane creatures exist. The dreams in which the soul has all of its extraordinary experiences can be both beneficial and dangerous to the man or woman who dreams. Dreams by women would not fit into the general structure of Murngin society, since the world of the extraordinary is largely experienced by men. There is no doubt that women dream; but the social situation which would cause dreaming in men under many conditions would not exist for women, and if there were any ritual causation of dreaming it would be of a very weak kind.

It is necessary for a man to dream before his child is born. This dream is always of an extraordinary variety since the Murngin consider the child to have left its totem well and approached the father and asked him where it could find its mother. It is the father who directs the child to its mother; it then enters her womb, to be carried by her until birth.

Just before or during a great ceremony such as the Narra, Djungguan, or Gunabibi one or more of the participants is supposed to dream of a recently dead man who belonged to his totemic clan and who possessed the same totem. The power name of the man is then given to the totemic emblem which is to be used, which means to the Murngin that there is an identification between the man and the totem. This spiritualization of the dream to the level of the sacred totemic world finds expression in the fundamental myth in Murngin social organization, namely, the story of the two Wawilak

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X173 "Our mother is this tree," they replied. They all said the names of their mother in unison and pointed at the tree. Once again they said, "She is our mother."

[842] Even today, if a man has no children and he wishes his wives to be pregnant he goes to this tree and knocks against it and his wives become pregnant. The man who had come from the bush was a Djapu Wongar man. His name was Wulakit. He lived in the northeast of them, inside the bush.

IRAKI MYTH OF THE MILKY WAY, FISH, AND THE FLOOD

Mullet, codfish, salmon, kingfish, and all those fish had a big dance. Two Dua men made a big fish trap. Opossum came down and found where those men had made the fish trap. One of the wives of the men had come out to gather mangrove shells on the beach. Opossum sat down by the fire. He sat very close to it. The woman came out from the mangrove jungle with her shells. She fixed the ashes for their cooking. When she was doing this she threw the ashes all over Opossum and burned him. Opossum kicked and ran away. He ran straight to the people that belonged to him. All opossums from everywhere came and they made a Narra ceremony for him. He told those people that two men and a woman had burned him. The people got up and ran with him with their spears in their hands to the place where he had been burned. When they arrived at the place an opossum told the man that his wife had thrown ashes on him. The man said Opossum could kill his wife, which he did. He turned the man loose. The man then said, "What am I going to do for a wife?" He had a very big iraki (maraiin, symbol of the Bapa Indi). It was lying in the creek in the mud. Plenty of fish were in that iraki. The iraki was lying in the fork of a tree in the mud. The man sang for his wife.

While he did this he broke one limb of the tree off. The iraki fell down. A great flood of water came out of it. The water came and the fish came out too. The men were very frightened. "What are we going to do with this iraki?" they said. "We'll take it and put it back high up in the sky."

They started calling for more and more men to help them. They called out for Crow (wak). Crow was like a man then. It was before he had become a bird. He took that iraki in his mouth and flew with it until he reached the sky. They left the iraki in the sky. You can see it there today. It is in the Milky Way.

Those crows come now just before the dry season and fly high up in the sky. Wak also left a shell high in the sky. There is thunder inside that iraki, just the same as when man blows on it down here below. The iraki is the Milky Way. The man and a great number of his wives sit up there in the sky with him. You can't see the crows there, but you can see the shell and the spear and the fires that belong to the man and his wives and the iraki and also the forks in the tree. They hold the iraki in the sky.

2: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1955
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sume a dominant rôle in any of its corporate activities. He can become initiated into its cult "mysteries," certain aspects can be revealed to him; but, however much he may know about these, he remains virtually an outsider. 602 611

A man's submerged association with the mother's line of descent may be viewed in terms of mutual aid. It is described in the following way. A man's bones are made from seminal fluid, his flesh from his mother's blood. A male of one moiety and a female of the other have combined in mutual "work" (i.e., *djama*, "work," sexual intercourse) and through their efforts formed the fetus. Because of his bones, the enduring part of his physical body, and because of the patri-ancestor who animated his fetus, a man may be acknowledged a member of his patri-line. But because his mother gave him his flesh, so to speak, he has some connection with her patri-line. Because he has only flesh from her, he cannot handle the sacred emblem poles of her patri-line. But his bones are really his father's *babaru* sacred poles; and because of this, and because of his ancestor's spirit, he attains full status in his father's patri-line. Because his mother co-operated with his father in bringing about his birth, because she added something to his physical being, he must always assist in the ceremonies of his mother's patri-line. When men perform on their sacred ground, those of the opposite moiety aid them in minor dancing, in singing, in calling invocations. But they may never handle the sacred emblems, never impersonate their ancestors; the cloak of spiritual sacredness may never descend upon them. A parallel with the Nuba may be drawn here (Nadel 1947:213). 602 611 842 826 616 171

Within the mother's patri-line one finds relationships such as *momo*, NGADI, GALWAL, *yandi*, GALEI, *galei*; intimacy with the females with the *galei*, sexual intimacy, with the *yandi* and *momo*, freedom of expression, lack of constraint; formal constraint with the males, GALEI, NGADI and GALWAL. There too, ideally speaking, are the M.Bros. of each generation of males of the patri-line. This is EGO's avunculine; its importance to EGO depends on the importance of the M.B. 602 611

E. MARI-GU'DJAI Line of Inheritance. The third line of descent is of a different nature: it signifies EGO's descent or inheritance through females to the third ascendant generation level, headed by a male, linking EGO with the patri-line of his m.m. This is not the "matrilineal descent line" spoken of by Radcliffe-Brown, when a man is followed by his Sr.S. Murdock (1949:15, 44) and Herskovits (1949:290), for example, have given us definitions relating to matrilineal descent. Do these conform with what we find among the Wulamba? First, we may observe that this "descent line" cutting diagonally across the structure of the system does not mean that EGO is assigned exclusively to that group (consisting of all females of that line and their male siblings): i.e., it does not assign a person to his mother's kin group. If the latter were inferred, this would mean that EGO would be affiliated with female and male members of both his mother's patri- and matri-lines. Now we may be prepared to say that by matrilineal descent we mean that a person belongs to his mother's "family," but that for purposes of inheritance and succession this is traced 611

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Murngin OII7

at each end, their holes. Cross-hatched panels *f, f, f,* represent the paths made by the *gunjun* crabs as they ran from one hole to another.

The turtle track has now been transformed into a group of red and yellow sand-hills and the holes of the *gunjun* crabs into low bushes.

(a) THE CONCEPTION BELIEFS

Throughout the eastern side of Arnhem Land the aborigines believe the spirit child visits the father in a dream and asks to be directed to his future mother. The sources from which these children spring, however, vary with the different localities.

At Groote Eylandt, the children travel on the winds, those of the *wirirkapara* moiety on the *mamariga* (south-east) wind,[9] and those of the *oranikapara* (equivalent to the *jiritja* on the mainland) on the *bara* (north-east) wind.[10] The little spirit child hides in the grass until it has an opportunity of visiting the father in a dream and asking him for a mother.

At Milingimbi, Warner[11] states, the spirit child, who has been living in the totemic well in the form of a small fish, asks the sleeping father the name of its mother. The father points her out, the child enters her body and starts life as a human being.

It was at Yirrkalla, however, that I was able to obtain, through the medium of the bark paintings, a more complete account of the conception beliefs.

(i) *The Conception Beliefs of the Dua Moiety of Yirrkalla*

The people of the *dua* moiety believe that when *Tjambuwal*, the thunder-man, creates the rain clouds he places in them a number of spirit children, *jurtu*. These *jurtu*, who are so small that only the medicine-men can see them, descend on the raindrops to the land, or the sea. If on the land, the little *jurtu* enter one of the various *dua* yams, fruits, and especially the *dua jurapang* or *liawan* wild honey; if the *jurtu* falls in the sea, it inhabits the *dua* fish or the green turtles. The little child spirits of *Tjambuwal* will not have anything to do with *purra* lands.

One day, as shown in the painting, two men catch a green turtle, bring it to the shore and cut it up so that everyone can have a meal. The cutting up of the turtle releases the *dua* spirit child living in its body. That night, when everyone is asleep, the spirit child, *jurtu*, visits one of the men in a dream and says:

'You are my father. *Tjambuwal* put me in the turtle you cut up today, so that I could find a mother. Where is she?'

The father points out one of his wives, whom he has been told has ceased menstruating: the child enters her body and starts a terrestrial existence. Next morning the father, if he remembers the dream (the aboriginal men said that it was not often that they did), says to his wife:

9. Myth of *mamariga* wind, Pl. 24D. 10. Myth of *bara* wind, Pl. 21B.
11. Warner (1937), p. 21.

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'Last night a *jurtu* came and asked me for a mother, so I sent it to you.' Within a short time the mother shows signs of pregnancy.

In the middle of Pl. 99B is *Tjainbuwal*, holding the spirit child, *jurtu*, by the hand. Over his head are the boomerang-shaped clouds, *wulmu*. The groups of curving cross-hatched panels on the upper edge and the left-hand side of the painting are rain clouds, *b*, the home of the spirit child. On the right-hand side are two men spearing a turtle inhabited by a *jurtu* and on the left a pregnant woman. The curving cross-hatched lines at *a*, on the extreme right of the painting, represent the water disturbed by the wounded creature.

(ii) *The Conception Beliefs of the Jiritja Moiety*

The conception beliefs of the *jiritja* moiety vary somewhat from those of the *dua*. They believe that when a woman ceases to menstruate her blood goes into the sky and is there changed into a spirit child, *jurtu*. After some time the little *jurtu*, desiring an earthly mother, creates a thunderstorm and a rainbow, and, using the raindrops as a vehicle of travel, descends to the earth. If the *jurtu* falls into the sea, it enters some *jiritja* creature such as a dugong, a hawksbill turtle or a queen fish; if on the land, a hive of *jiritja* honey, *kamon* or *barangit*, or the body of some *jiritja* creature. Should the aborigines spear a dugong and find that it is particularly fat, or locate a hive well stocked with honey, they know that the dugong or the hive is inhabited by a spirit child.

When, for example, the dugong is cut open, and the *jurtu* escapes, it visits the sleeping father and asks him which of his wives is to be his mother. As with the *dua* moiety, the father points out a wife who has ceased menstruating. The child enters her body through the vulva. If the father remembers next morning he tells the expectant mother about his dream. Soon afterwards the woman feels the movements of the *jurtu* within her body. As soon as a woman ceases to menstruate, she must not eat meat or fish. Her diet is limited to grass-seeds, yams, the fruit of the cycad, shell-fish and crabs.

On Pl. 99C the father and pregnant mother are at the upper edge of the painting. On either side of them are large thunder-clouds created by the spirit child, *jurtu*. On the right of the painting is falling rain, parallel lines of cross-hatching, and on the extreme left two dugongs; the cross-hatching around them is the sea. The U-shaped symbol is a rainbow created by the little *jurtu*, at the base of which is one who has descended on the raindrops. He is swimming about in the sea, waiting for an opportunity to enter the body of one of the dugongs which, he hopes, will be captured by the men in the canoe.[12] The artist explained that he had made a mistake by not allowing himself enough room to paint the dugong in the canoe with the spirit child inside of it. So he painted the *jurtu* only.

12. The *jurtu*, like the *mari* of the Ndjamatana tribe of the northern Flinders Ranges of South Australia, are, before they enter the mother, complete, self-directing beings. Mountford and Harvey (1941), p. 150.

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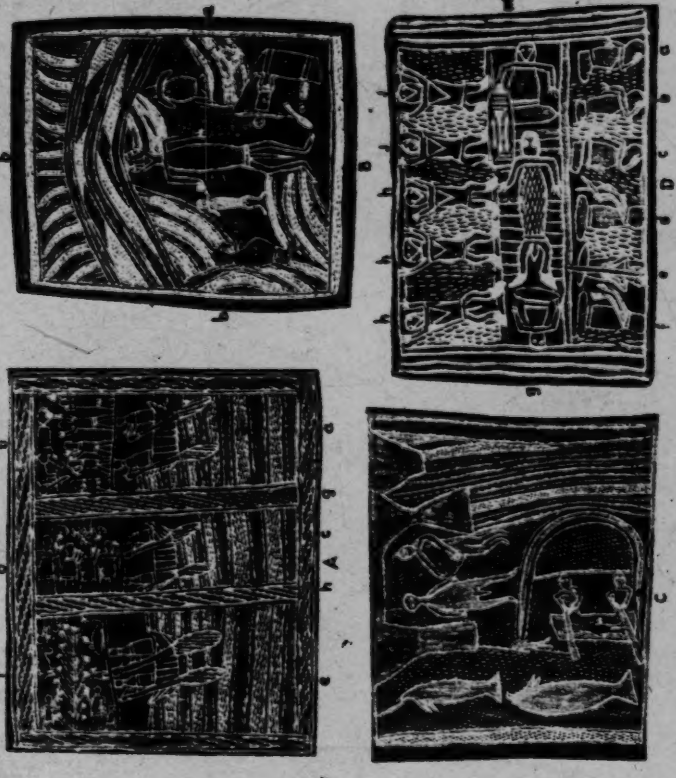

PLATE 99. Bark paintings, Yirrkalla

A The journey of the dua-clan B Dua conception beliefs
C Jirrija conception beliefs D Burial, cleansing the bones

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after another. At first the spears penetrate deeply into his flesh, but after a while it becomes so hard and tough that the spears cannot even pierce the skin.[47] While this is going on, the women sit on the ground and wail in sympathy for the sufferings of the new spirit.

This ordeal over, the men of Purelko take the new spirit to their camp, tell him that he has passed his initiation, teach him many new songs and dances and invite him to join in their ceremonies.

The method of entry of the spirit of a woman is somewhat different. When the masked plover, *berrk-berrk*, announces the arrival of a new spirit and the head man, *Jaualin-wuru*, finds out that it is a woman, he sends a small child along the track which leads from the beach to Purelko, telling it to find its mother and bring her to him. *Jaualin-wuru* always camps on that track so that no one can reach Purelko without being properly prepared. After *Jaualin-wuru* has met the new arrival and, if necessary, transformed her into a young woman in good health, she stays in his camp until she is pregnant. She is then admitted to Purelko where, after a short and painless period of gestation, she gives birth to her child. The idea behind this belief is that a woman, who must be perfect to enter Purelko, has to show that she is capable of bearing a child.

Two women, *Dunjun-jina* and *Mitjuna*, live at Purelko and keep the morning star, *barnumbir*, in a string bag, guarding it jealously all the day and most of the night, lest it should escape. A little before dawn, *Jaualin-wuru*, the head man of Purelko, says to the women: 'It's time that you let the morning star out of that bag so that it can visit the *dua* camps on earth both to wake up the men, women and children and to give them the messages from the dead.'

The woman *Mitjuna* objects strongly to this suggestion, because she is afraid that she might lose *barnumbir*, but *Jaualin-wuru* overrules her, and releases the morning star, which is already struggling to get out of the bag to perform its allotted tasks.[48] At first *barnumbir* rests on the top of a tall pandanus tree from which it can see a long distance. This causes the women to cry out in fear that they might lose the star, and to ask that it be returned to them. To pacify the women *Jaualin-wuru* pulls the morning star back again, it is on a string, and puts it in the bag. But, though the women are pleased, *Jaualin-wuru* thinks of the aborigines on earth waiting for their messages. So he opens the bag again and allows *barnumbir* to escape. For a while the morning star dances along the surface of the water, but soon climbs rapidly into the sky. It visits each *dua* place in turn,[49] wakes the aborigines and then gives them messages from their relatives and friends at Purelko. Just as dawn is breaking *Jaualin-wuru* takes hold of the

47. The body is speared when it is taken from the burial platform, p. 312. Warner (1937), p. 413, refers to the same practice. All the male spirits have to pass through this initiation ritual at Purelko. There are different rituals for the women, p. 326. There are no such ordeals in the *pulpa* heaven, Nalkuna.

48. The *dua* moiety of Milingimbi have a similar belief. Myth, p. 328.

49. See p. 327 for the list of *dua* localities.

114 that the several centuries of contact with Macassan and pre-Macas-
177 san traders, fishers and sojourners which marked the Arnhem Land
794 coasts from the Victoria River right round to Groote Eylandt, were
796 not experienced in the other two tropical regions. It is, therefore, possible that pre-Islamic religious influence was exerted on the Aborigines, perhaps through individuals who accompanied the Macassans and others to the islands to the north, for in some of these, the earlier Hindu cults were cherished in spite of the proselytizing nature of Islam. Moreover, the Mother cult-heroine is said in
[773] myths to have come through the sea, whether she be Kunapipi of the Victoria and the Roper, or the Mother of the Iwaidja and other tribes of Western Arnhem Land.*

Mana and Other Problems

The above is the general principle and question raised by the
114 Kunapipi cult. Mr. Berndt's book, however, in giving a description
778 and analysis of this cult, raises many other important matters. For example, there is the problem of power or "grace" in religion, indicated in north-east Arnhem Land by the term *dal*. It is the anthropological problem of *mana* over again. It operates through the Mother
[776] or through Ancestral Beings who in their "spirit parts" are present in the ritual. But does the ritual automatically release that power, setting it in motion for the welfare of man and nature? Or is it manifested through life and increase by the will of the Mother or other Being in response to the ritual? Obviously, according to the doctrine, it cannot operate apart from such Being or Beings. Indeed, is it not that Being in activity or rather in relation to man and nature —an activity and presence realized in ritual? Problems associated with the Doctrine of the Trinity are not peculiar to Christianity.

114 Mr. Berndt agrees with Professor Warner that the Aborigines are
● 842 not ignorant of physiological paternity. The ritual supports this con-
796 tention. True, these natives hold also the doctrine of pre-existence, of spirit-children who enter the mothers for incarnation. But, what this entry does is to provide the "shade", the eternal spirit-part, and so give life to that which is already in the womb, as the result of sexual intercourse. Intercourse does not merely prepare the way for the entry of the child-spirit and for its subsequent birth; this is the usual view. In addition, it is followed by the formation of the foetus

* The point of entry of the Fertility Mother cult of north-western Arnhem Land is definitely placed by the Aborigines and their song cycles in the Coburg Peninsula. The Kunapipi cult, however, seems to be distinct from this, and while I incline to find its point of distribution in the lower Victoria region, the final decision must wait for more research in the field and further analysis of the material already in hand. Mr. Berndt's maps in this volume refer only to the recent and present movement of Kunapipi songs, the movement west from the Roper being a return along a song route to a western point of distribution, and not necessarily diffusion from a point of entry at the mouth of the Roper.

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which then has to be quickened. The coastal Arnhem Landers have had centuries of contact, and it may be that the usually accepted Aboriginal doctrine of conception has been modified here. In any case, granting the premises, the form in which they hold it is eminently logical. 114 842 796

Amongst the many other interesting points raised by the author is the vital significance of dreams, particularly for ritual and its interpretation. One of Mr. Berndt's important contributions to the anthropology of northern Arnhem Land is his systematic recording of dreams—a sign of the confidence put in him by the natives, and also a sign of the objectivity with which they regard dreams. 114 123 787

One last point: Mr. Berndt lays stress on the importance of the ritual rôle played by women in this region. He is correct in doing so. Though they are not on the "Mother Place", yet they are nearby playing their part, a part which stems from the Dreamtime, when the sacred ritual was theirs; and how else could it be, for life and birth is through the womb? A cult of the Great Mother would have no foundation apart from the women through whom her children must be born. Women here have their sacred aspect and sacred rôle. 114 562 796

The Author and the Field

Mr. R. M. Berndt was well equipped for doing research into the religion of Arnhem Land. After study in the Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, he with his wife (Catherine H. Berndt), also an Anthropologist, did four years of field research amongst Aborigines in both tribal and detribalized conditions. This included about eighteen months on the south-west of Arnhem Land and on the border of the Kimberley Division of Western Australia, where he was introduced to the cult. In 1946 when the Australian National Research Council was able to make a further grant to these workers, we selected the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land as the main field. Research there would be complementary to what Dr. Warner had done eighteen years before; in addition it was an area subject to the spread of native customs and rites from both the west and the south, and was also likely to show some cultural effects arising from long contact with Macassans or others who visited the region to engage in marine industry. Finally, although a Mission had been operating at Yirrkalla for nearly ten years and an Air Force base had been established there during the war, causing some modification of native life, in particular, lessening the degree of nomadism, yet in spite of this, the fundamental drives and beliefs had not been affected. Men in the prime of life as well as the old men still belonged to the "old order". It was, therefore, still possible to study the native religion in its cultural and social setting as a functioning institution. Fortunately, I was able to assure myself of this during a visit and inquiries in the region in 1946. 114 121 [122] [797] [177]

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PREFACE

The main purpose of this work is to indicate some fundamental features of an Australian Aboriginal religious cult, the Kunapipi, in one particular area. North-eastern Arnhem Land has been selected, not because it presents a more exotic background or more spectacular ceremonies, but because the cult as seen here is fairly well defined, and because its religious concepts are important and significant to the people concerned. In this region there are several fairly well integrated religious cults, having a common theme and fundamental intent. Most of them, however, have complex local associations, whereas the Kunapipi ceremonies, which have been introduced into north-east Arnhem Land, belong to a configuration which is still widely diffused throughout the Northern Territory.

The plan is to examine the cult as seen in this one region, to consider its relative importance in adjacent areas, and so prepare the way for a more intensive analysis of it in the central-western part of the Northern Territory. Although introduced, the Kunapipi has become closely associated with more truly north-east Arnhem Land mythology, in particular, the Wauwalak, which is used to explain it; but the Wauwalak mythology itself was at some time diffused into north-eastern Arnhem Land, apparently from the same direction as this much later ritual.

The Kunapipi songs of Yirrkalla (in north-east Arnhem Land) have been derived from those commonly in use further south. By examining relevant songs and mythology of adjacent areas, it is possible to trace the movement and diffusion of this cult from one group to another, and to discuss (for instance) the source of the Yirrkalla Kunapipi. This is not really difficult, for the Kunapipi (in all the regions mentioned in this work) possesses the common theme of a Great Mother, expressed as either a single or a dual personality, her power being extended to her daughters, the Wauwalak, Ka'lerika'lering or Mungamunga. She is said to be responsible for the constant fertility of human beings and other natural species, and the continuing sequence of the seasons, as well as for the general similarity of her ritual, emblems and songs. In addition, certain "key" words, which are sacred, are used widely to designate ceremonies, objects and sacred beings.

What does this cult mean to its postulants? Why does it exist? What do the people themselves believe that they are receiving from it? Its basic intent seems to express the latent or conscious desires of

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Arnhem Land, social organization: the division of society into two groups (that is, moieties) was, with the kinship structure, the traditional norm. But within recent years the sub-section system has been introduced from the south and south-west, coming up the coast through Rose River and Blue Mud Bay. In the Milingimbi region it seems to have been introduced at an earlier date, through contact with the inland tribes, particularly the Reinbaranga. At Yirrkalla, however, the sub-sections are not yet completely co-ordinated with the kinship terminology, and among the older people are not in constant use. Certain sub-section terms are however mentioned from time to time in this work, in reference to Ancestral Beings; they will not be discussed in this context, and reference should be made to the work of L. Warner, T. T. Webb, A. P. Elkin and R. Berndt.[3]

c The Religious Quality of Yirrkalla Social Life:

Yirrkalla society, like most other Australian Aboriginal communities, whether of desert, hill or coast, must forage for its food, the abundance of which depends on the particular environment. On the north coast and rivers of Arnhem Land, food of many varieties is available in great quantities. In spite of this, however, its constant supply is said to depend on the rhythm of the seasons, upon the mythical characters of the Eternal Dreaming Period, and on the performance of associated ritual and ceremony. In order to ensure a constant supply of food, in the form of natural species generally, these aborigines rely on the great ceremonial cycles of *djunggawon*, *kunapipi*, *ngu:rlmak*, and the *dua* and *jiritja nara* cycles which are usual in this region. These rituals, associated with the principal Ancestral Beings such as Djanggawul, Wauwalak, Laintjung, Banaitja and Baijini, are the basis of indigenous religion. But they are not concerned merely with the provision of food. Their purpose is, primarily, to ensure the continuation of the human species; the increase of all other animals, birds, fish, vegetable matter, and so on, is only an adjunct to the main theme.

This religion then is a dominant quality in Yirrkalla life, and is reflected in all its institutions and conventional forms of behaviour. It concerns itself with the fructification of all living things, and in that category human beings themselves are considered the most important. As, however, the Kunapipi cult is especially concerned with their rhythmic sequence of birth and rebirth, it is crystallized in a definite concept of a Fertility Mother. Moreover, the cult is concerned with the coming and going of the seasons, the appearance and disappearance of vegetable and plant matter, and the propagu-

3. *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.* 1937, pp. 116–124, and his Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship, *American Anthropologist*, n.s. 33, 2, 184; T. T. Webb, *op. cit.* pp. 406–408; A. P. Elkin, *op. cit.* pp. 412–416; R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*, Chap. 1.

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tion of other natural species—all phenomena which are necessary for the continuance and well-being of the people themselves. In keeping with this doctrine, a natural development has been the stress on procreation—the importance of pregnancy and child-birth, and the essential sequence of sexual intercourse and conception, expressed particularly in ritual and long song cycles.

In order to understand Kunapipi cult life and belief, it is necessary to summarize very briefly some of the other cults which flourish beside it in this area.

The Djanggawul myth, consisting of several hundreds of lengthy songs, relates the adventures of two men and two women, who in the Dreaming Period landed at Port Bradshaw, on the north-east Arnhem Land coast. They had journeyed across the sea from an island called Bralku, now known as the *dua* home of the dead, somewhere beyond Groote Eylandt. These Ancestral Beings are known generally as the Djanggawul, but had their own personal names. The leader was Djanggawul himself; the two women were his sisters, the younger Maralaitj, and the older Pildjiwuraroiju; and their companion was Bralbral, who plays only a minor part in this great cycle. In their canoe they brought a large conical *ngainmara* mat, which is now used particularly by the women, and also certain sacred *rangga* sticks possessing life-giving qualities. The mat symbolized the uterus; the *rangga* sticks were penes, and when not being used ritually, were kept hidden in the *ngainmara*.

As the Djanggawul journeyed along the coast, they met other Ancestral Beings like Laintjung and the Baijini, and Spirits such as Pomapoma, Kultana, Woijal, Burulu-burulu and others; but none of these had the procreating powers of the great Djanggawul. Djanggawul had an elongated penis; and his two sisters had long clitori which dragged on the ground as they walked. Djanggawul had sexual relations with his sisters, so that they were continually pregnant. From time to time, at the camps where they stayed, he would lift their clitori to one side, and put his hand up into the uteri to remove many children of both sexes: these were the ancestors of the present aborigines. The song cycle features the perpetual pregnancy of the two sisters, their uteri being likened to the *ngainmara* mats which they brought with them, while the people who are removed from them in childbirth are the *rangga*. It is said that a person's bones are like *rangga*, inherited from both the father and mother, who in turn inherited theirs through the generations of ancestors, right back to the Eternal Times of Djanggawul and the creative heroes. Therefore, at death, a person's material remains, as well as his spiritual substance, must be treated with respect, and surrounded by ritual.

An important aspect of this myth, second only to the theme of fertility, concerns the institution of sacred ritual. In the beginning,

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773 776 831 ventional interpretation of Kunapipi mythology. The vomiting of the Wauwalak, with their revivification and re-swallowing, and their subsequent swallowing in spirit form, extends the symbolism, and may be compared with the coming and going (birth and rebirth) of the totemites to and from the Mother's uterus.

This interpretation, based on details expressed by aborigines themselves, concerns only the Kunapipi rituals, for other purely indigenous ritual must be interpreted in the light of the Djanggawul mythology, and various extensions of the Wauwalak cycle. However, the basis of Yirrkalla religion rests on the premise of a Fertility Mother, who is an "Eternal" symbol of nature in her abundance. She is accompanied by a Great Snake as a symbol of insemination.

The association of the Snake with a Fertility Mother is fundamental in this doctrine. In recognizing this fact, we must realize that [842] the aborigine of northern Arnhem Land understands the importance of coitus in bringing about conception and birth. And this principle is basic in their thinking.[13]

13. *Vide* L. Warner's interpretation, *op. cit.* pp. 371 *et seq.*

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copulation to take place between two "cousins" (*mukul* and *gurung*), who were normally tabu-ed relatives, formally unable to talk to one another, and classified as mother-in-law and son-in-law.[10] That is, the sacredness of the occasion demanded that sexual intercourse take place between individuals who were at other times tabu. Such coitus would, on the sacred ground, be considered far more potent, from the point of view of fertility, than that between persons who were classified as "husband" and "wife", were of different moieties, and were comparatively easy of access even if not living together.

Coitus between *mukul* "cousins" at ceremonial periods was termed *ngirimbu'njamari'gwu:wa*, loosely translated as "living with one's cousin for *now* or to-day (that is, for a little while)". Their coitus was said to result in "starting a baby in the female *mukul*"; and this was later looked upon as belonging, spiritually at least, to the male *mukul*. Both *mukul* would be of the same moiety; and the child produced from such a union, which normally would be considered incestuous, would by taking the moiety of its father (for descent of the moiety is patrilineal) also be taking that of its mother. Recognition of the fact that a child would be born of this ceremonial intercourse between two *mukul*, and the parentage acknowledged, demonstrates one aspect of these people's knowledge of physiological paternity.[11] The reason for the carrying out of incestuous intercourse on the sacred ground, for ceremonial purposes, is reflected in the Wauwalak mythology; for it will be recalled that the elder Wauwalak sister had incestuous relations with a clansman (of the same moiety) before coming to Muruwul, and as a result of this intercourse, a child was born. But although the elder Wauwalak had sexual relations with a man who was of the same moiety as herself, the child apparently took not *dua*, its actual father's moiety, but *jiritja*, as if it had had a *jiritja* father (*vide* Wauwalak myth, Chapter III). "We do it", aborigines say, "because of that Wauwalak: that is why two *mukul* copulate, and their child is acknowledged".

Usually, however, it seems that intercourse takes place between a man and his classificatory brother's wife; but exceptions do occur which may normally be considered incestuous or "wrong-way". Even before the actual ceremonial intercourse takes place, as a climax to the Kunapipi, copulation between Kunapipi partners

10. This ceremonial copulation with a *mukul* still occurs in the Rose River region. *Vide* Chapter V, which describes a drawing of this ritual.
11. This, aborigines say, "happened in the old times, when the old people had this Kunapipi (suggesting that the Kunapipi was introduced at an early period); we changed from that. Now we only get the daughter of that *mukul*, but in the old time we should have got the *mukul*". But other information casts some doubt as to whether this practice of having ceremonial intercourse with a *mukul* took place only in the past. For example, it is said: "our old people married their *mukul* in the old days, and *now we do it* (that is, copulate) in the Kunapipi, in memory of those old times".

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right down. The girl's legs are tied to the posts, so that her legs are outstretched between them. (We know of no other reference to the actual tying down of the Kunapipi girl who has been chosen for ceremonial coitus. As a young girl is specified, this probably refers to ritual defloration which has been mentioned briefly elsewhere—*vide* Chapters IV, V and X. It suggests also that force is used to hold the girl, a feature which should not normally accompany this rite; moreover, promiscuity is such a feature of this area, with the breaking down of indigenous regulations governing sexual conduct, that one would not expect it to be necessary.) [831] [794] [796] [114]

The men then paint themselves, and line up for dancing. There may be two or three hundred men on the sacred ground. The headman begins to beat his clapping sticks, while the dancing men clap their hands rhythmically to the music and song, and call out intermittently. Then the first man, at the head of the long line of dancing men, leaves the line and goes into the shade and copulates with the Kunapipi girl; the other men continue clapping their hands and calling out. [833]

Under the girl, immediately beneath her vulva, a small depression has been dug and in it has been placed a shallow paperbark dish; this catches the semen and vaginal juices that come out of the girl.

When the first man has left the hut, another takes his place; this is continued until all the men in the line have entered the hut and copulated, and their semen has flowed from the girl into the paperbark container.

By this time, the container is full; and after a rest, the men remove it from the hut and begin to paint themselves with the semen; then they continue their dancing, which goes on from early morning until sunset. Ceremonial coitus takes place each day for several weeks, different girls being chosen for each ceremony." Other rituals relating to the Kunapipi are also performed in a sequence similar to that already discussed. [302]

It should be mentioned that the reason given for thus decorating the postulants' bodies with designs in semen and vaginal juices is the belief in the fructifying potency of the former. The act of ceremonial coitus is itself symbolic of fertilization, and the subsequent increase of human and the natural species; semen is the essence which causes pregnancy; and this natural and logical belief is an integral part of the rituals of the Kunapipi fertility cult. [842] [789]

There is also an association between semen and the saliva of the Julunggul Snake (*vide* Chapter III, *et seq.*); it was with this substance that Julunggul smeared the Wauwalak and the child prior to swallowing. This "saliva" is represented by white pipe-clay in parts of the Kunapipi, and it is with this that Kunapipi neophytes are painted. [773] [386]

Significance of the Djanggawul

These material objects, then, such as the sacred *rangga*, bag and mat, are focal points, or symbols, through which we may grasp the significance of the concept as a whole. The mat is a uterus symbol; so is the whale, although used in this sense only incidentally. Here is the source of all life, for it was from the Uteri of the Sisters that the first people sprang. Moreover, these Aborigines have recognized the importance of the sexual act in causing conception and pregnancy. This natural sequence of events has many parallels in the animal life they observe about them. Throughout the myth direct references are made to sexual intercourse, while symbolic references in both the myth and songs are numerous. The *rangga* poles, the yam stick, *manwulan*, *djuda* and *djanda* are themselves penis symbols, an interpretation made quite frankly by the Aborigines themselves. The poles, for instance, are kept hidden within the *ngainmara*, and removed from time to time for drying, thus symbolizing coitus (penis in vagina as a projection of the uterus), and drying the penis after intercourse when it has become 'wet' with semen and vaginal juices. Or the *manwulan* is plunged into the earth, so that water gushes forth at its removal; this is compared to coitus, the removal of the penis from the vagina, and the subsequent flow of seminal and vaginal juices when the Sisters stand up again. Waterholes themselves are vulva symbols, used frequently in Aboriginal song and mythology, while trees (for example, the *djuda*) are penis symbols, and their roots are called by the term used for penis (*vide* songs). A great deal of this erotic symbolism is expressed in sacred ritual, in posturing and actions.

From this we see something of the importance of sexual intercourse. To the Aborigines, as to us, sex and food are basic drives. Whatever subsidiary drives exist, these two are fundamental, for upon them human life, as they know it, depends. The Aborigines are apt to stress the importance of the sexual drive. 'How else', they say, 'can we continue as a group? By what other means can we obtain food except by its natural increase?' Thus even certain forms of plant life are divided into male and female sexes. Sexual intercourse is felt to be necessary for survival, in so far as the human and animal world is concerned, although this survival depends ultimately on forces beyond the Aborigines' control—on seasonal fluctuation, and on the sun, and so we come back to the significance underlying the Djanggawul. The Aborigines of north-eastern and north-central Arnhem Land consequently pay much attention to sexual matters, and their attitude towards this subject is one of utmost frankness.[1] To them, sexual intercourse is an essential

[1] *Vide* Introduction to *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land* (R. and C. Berndt), Viking Fund Series in Anthropology, Yale University, 1951. No 16.

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preliminary to pregnancy. Children in this area, for instance, are called *jndu* (*jutu*, usually employed in a singular sense), or *djamarguli* (plural). The former word means 'semen'; that is, the child originated from the semen. The latter means 'through (or from) work'; to 'work' (*djama*) a female is to have coitus, and *djamarguli* is literally the 'result of working (or coitus)'.

Erotic references, then, in the Djanggawul cult merely conform to the accepted pattern. To say that the Aborigine is concerned unduly with the subject of sex, and derives a morbid satisfaction from constant direct or symbolic reference to it, it to distort the actual position. He is frankly interested in the workings of the human body, and in the satisfaction of its basic needs; and he recognizes the fundamental importance of the act, not only in ensuring the continuation of life, but also in helping to stabilize relations between members of both sexes, through their very interdependence. It is not unexpected, therefore, to find manifestations of this interest in Aboriginal religious emblems and mythology, ritual and song. Indeed, what more obvious means of expression could a simple group of people have? Here, in the Djanggawul doctrine, are crystallized their hopes and desires, related to their fundamental drives, co-ordinated with the natural resources and phenomena and with the environment which they know.

Numerous references are made to the removal of the *rangga* from the *ngainmara*, a symbolic allusion also to the removal of children from the wombs of the Sisters: for *rangga* are likened to children, or human beings, and men and women may use this term to refer to their bones. The spiritual content of the bones is the same as that of the sacred *rangga*, and has, moreover, been passed on from their ancestors—those who were originally removed from the Sisters. When, for example, postulants enter the sacred hut (= *ngainmara* = uterus) on the ritual ground, they are like *rangga* being hidden away within the *ngainmara*. In a polygynous marriage, too, the wives are said to be like *rangga*: their husband has collected them into a group, and has a monopoly over them as a man has over his individual *rangga*. This likening of women to sacred *rangga* is interesting, but probably derives from the fact that women themselves are said to be the source of ritual knowledge,[1] and consequently sacred.

There is much stress, too, on the maternal qualities of the Djanggawul Sisters, although the Brother himself is of considerable importance. The Two Sisters are mentioned far more frequently, particularly in the Milingimbi version of the cycle, although this

[1] *Vide* Chapters 2 and 3. (See also M. Mead, *Male and Female*, London, 1950, pp. 202–3.)

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the warmth of the sun, which made it possible for all things to live and grow.

Apart from the significance of the myth as a whole, there are several interesting features. Throughout this version the incestuous relations of the Djanggawul Brother with his Sisters are acknowledged, and repeatedly mentioned. It is said that when the Djanggawul roamed Arnhem Land, there was no marriage system. The Djanggawul themselves possessed no moieties; it was only later, when their adventures became a matter of mythology, that they were classified as belonging to the *dua* moiety. Informants point out that the Djanggawul made their own laws, and are acknowledged as law-givers. It was through their incestuous intercourse that the Two Sisters were able to produce human beings, to populate the country through which they passed. Even at that early period, the importance of sexual intercourse in relation to pregnancy must have been realized, for the part the male plays in this activity is heavily stressed: the emphasis is such that it cannot be a mere projection of present-day knowledge.

Later in their travels, however, when the Djanggawul arrived at Blue Mud Bay and also at Elcho Island,[1] the Brother seems to have altered his attitude towards incest, and to have 'punished' his sons, by circumcision, for having coitus with their sisters.

It was, nevertheless, the Djanggawul themselves, answerable to no one, who determined their own law, and continued to cohabit together. The present marriage rules of local Aborigines are said to have been instituted by the Djanggawul; apart from sacred ritual, they created and gave to their people the complete structure of their social organization, with its associated culture. Some Aborigines, however, while acknowledging the primary importance of the Djanggawul, hold that other Ancestral Beings and Spirits were responsible for instituting certain features. Other religious cults have indeed come into being, among them the important Laintjung-Banaitja constellation. The Djanggawul, however, are considered responsible for establishing the fundamental pattern of this Aboriginal society.

To-day, when that society and culture are taken for granted by its members, the major importance of the Djanggawul lies in their sacred ritual and in their doctrine, which, regarded superficially, comprises merely the outline of their travels around the Arnhem Land coast. Underlying that story, however, is a vast wealth of symbolism and allusion, which will become more apparent after we have presented the great song cycle. It is this symbolism which is expressed in sacred ritual to-day, finding expression in song and

[1] *Vide* Footnote 3, p. 43.

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Sometimes a man and a woman run away because they like each other too much. This is a bad thing. Marriages should be arranged properly and people should do things that we do here when things are right. No one here likes runaway marriages. When people like each other too much it always makes trouble for all their relatives and for them (pages 86-88).

Some women stay no good. A man can give them a good hiding and what do they do? They go straight away and look for a new sweetheart. They are all the same as someone with an evil spirit in their heads.

His Children

When my son was born, I was very happy. Many moons before I had come back from a Djungguan python dance. I went to sleep by my campfire and had a dream. In the dream the spirit child came to me and said, "I am bringing something from Wongar to you. I am looking for my mother." I said to him, "Where do you come from?"

He said, "I came from your totem well. I am bringing a barrimundi fish for you" (pages 67-69).

I got up and walked around in the morning time. I went down close to the water along the beach. I saw a large barrimundi floating on the water. When he came close up, the tide threw this fish right up on the sand bank. I looked at him. His tail was moving. I thought quickly, "Oh, this one is from that dream." That fish was all the same as dead when I came up close. I took my spear-thrower, hooked it inside his mouth, and pulled him all the way along through the water and carried him back to camp. I left him there. I called out to a man. "You come help me," I said. "Come help carry this fish and get a fire ready."

The man said, "You lift him up yourself."

I said, "No, he is too big for me."

We two carried the barrimundi back to camp. We cooked him. One man cooked the liver and tasted it. He said, "It is very sweet and very fat but tastes very different."

I said, "Yes, it is different. I dreamed this one."

We started next day for a ceremony. We danced all night. We danced for over a moon.

Before my daughter came I did not dream at first. One day I was out hunting turtles. I saw a little bird. It was like a little fish in the sea. The little bird flew on one side of me and then the other. I heard him say, "Wheell Wheell" It was all the same as the wind in the trees. I thought then, "This is a spirit after me." I went ashore. I slept and I dreamed. This little bird came to me in the dream and said, "Father, I have come to you. Where is my mother?"

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159 I said, "Your mother is here alongside of me." Her mother had not had
787 children yet. We had no family. She was only a young girl. I awakened my
842 wife and told her my dream, for I thought straightaway, "I am going to have a daughter." I said to her, "I dreamed a girl for you." My wife knew then she was going to have a daughter.

After my daughter was born we knew we were going to have a son because I dreamed a son. One moon went by. My wife felt a little bit heavy. She told me. I said, "Yes, that is what I told you before in the dream." A few months later a son was born.

159 I like my children. If a father and mother do not take care of their sons
593 and daughters all the women everywhere start gossiping about them. They
626 say that they are crazy, that maybe they have an evil spirit in their heads,
855 and they say they are no good. We men talk the same way, too. We do not like to see little children mistreated. My little son is just the same as my
159 spear-thrower. He is just the same as my right arm (page 71). I think
842 it is a good thing for a man to have a lot of children. It makes a lot of
593 people in his tribe. It always gives him, when he gets old, all the things he wants to eat and use for himself. If he has trouble, and all men have trouble, he does not have to go to his mother's people or his wife's people for help. He has it himself. He can take his own sons and fight any people because he is strong. When a man has no sons and no daughters, then when he gets old he can do nothing. We black men like daughters too because when they marry that gives us many wakus and makes us very strong. Good sons-in-law always make many gifts. Good wakus make men proud. We like sons too because nobody can hurt us.

159 Sometimes people talk out loud in the camp at night, and they say,
582 "Which one did you promise this daughter of yours to?"

I say, "I don't know." I say, "No one." I say, "If I have a sister and she has a son I can't wait any longer then. I must point at that waku [sister's son and son-in-law]. He must get her. But now I must keep quiet. I can't say anything. My sister has no son and I must wait. My little boy's mother has a brother; by and by when he has a daughter, I must go to him and get that girl for my son. That will make everything right and keep our family straight" (pages 65-67).

Maikarolla as a Friend and a Murngin

000 Those who believe that the savage has a prerational mentality have not known natives intimately, either because of not being in contact with them or because of the mental barrier of scientific or religious dogma. The larger ideas and more general concepts of primitive people are much the same as our own. They have their philosophers and thinkers, their fools and their

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introduction to this fundamental aspect of aboriginal life is given in A. P. Elkin's *The Australian Aborigines: How to Understand Them.*

Totemism is fundamentally a complex of beliefs and attitudes based on a doctrine of oneness of life shared by nature and man. In other words, natural species and phenomena are brought into man's social order; that is, they are regarded as members of his local groups, clans, and moieties. Usually, too, a bond that is both social and religious is established between a group of men and women on the one hand and one or more natural species on the other. The latter are the totems of the former. In what is termed cult-society (or 'lodge') totemism, the totem is the symbol of the whole set of myth and ritual, which is the clan's link with, and door into, the 'eternal dream-time', the state and life of the great heroes, the ancestors, the spirits.

Mr Chaseling refers to many rites and beliefs which belong to the aboriginal religious world. Those connected with blood, described in Chapter 5, are especially interesting. We notice the taboo on eating food, because of the shedding of blood when obtaining it, or because of the presence of a corpse, and the rite for removing the taboo, which includes a 'totemic well', a sacred meal, and purification by fire. Another interesting rite is the singing of the myth of creation by the medicine-man as a cure (Chapter 10).

In Chapter 8, Mr Chaseling refers to the natives' belief regarding conception. The general reader may not be aware that in most regions of the continent, the Aborigines do not regard sexual intercourse as the cause of conception. Mr Chaseling says that was the case in north-east Arnhem Land, but that now, the view has been slightly modified; it is now held that intercourse is an act of preparation for, and an invitation to, the unborn spirit to enter the womb. This agrees with the findings of Spencer and Gillen and others for nearby regions. Dr Warner, however, came to the

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conclusion that in north-east Arnhem Land, the natives really did know the physiological facts, but were not interested in them; they were only interested in 'spiritual conception', which established a person's place in the social and religious structure of the tribe. But whatever be the degree of knowledge or ignorance regarding the physiological facts, there is no doubt that the accepted spiritual doctrine is one of pre-existence. The unborn spirits sojourn at the totemic well waiting to be incarnated, or reincarnated; to that centre they will return after death; and without the entry of the pre-existent spirit child into the womb, there could be no conception.

Everyday Matters

Mr Chaseling is not concerned with discussing complex social and religious problems. His aim is to help us know the Aboriginal as he is. To this end he provides much information regarding interesting everyday affairs. There is no smoke-signal code in this region, and message sticks are simply aids to memory. The Aborigines like having visitors and are anxious to keep them. Like the rest of us, they are subject to flattery, and they use a highly developed form of praise in asking for favours. The status of the women is low, but some affection is shown between spouses; moreover, women do exercise an important influence on affairs; for they live longer on the average than the man (they are not killed in 'wars'), and as a result accumulate a greater knowledge of the everyday myths and legends and of the clan's enemies and friends. There are about three females to each male, another consequence of 'warfare', and connected with this is the fact that usually a man has three wives; but there are a few cases of men with up to twelve wives.

These and many like facts are recorded in the pages which follow, pages which will do much to help readers appreciate the Aborigines of north-east Arnhem Land as human beings,

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FAMILY LIFE IN THE JUNGLE

Theories of conception and birth have been severely jolted in recent years, for until recently it was not known that intercourse had any connection with conception, and Yulengor regarded it as being merely a natural and satisfying function. There are no virgins in aboriginal society, for at an early age a girl is handed over to her husband and is married for the rest of her life. In parts of western Arnhem Land, when hordes gather for ceremonies, their hosts provide them with food and also advance their wives for the visitors' well-being. The question of illegitimate children does not arise, for births are thought to be the work of a spirit.

At some time when the potential father is hunting, the spirit of his prospective child comes to him and presents him with a large fish or turtle and enables him to spear it. Not yet comprehending the omen, the man returns to camp with the spirit at heel, and when all are asleep this spirit enters the mother and begins its preparations for birth. In a variation of this belief, the spirit follows the mother when she goes for water, and jumps into the water so as to enter the woman. When a man knows that his wife is to become a mother he endeavours to recall some unusual experience that has befallen him in hunting. His mind dwells on any large fish he has caught, perhaps in the last month, or maybe several years previously, and he regards this incident as marking the coming of the spirit-child.

Half-caste children compelled a readjustment of these ideas. First it was assumed that eating the white man's food or the wearing of white clothing caused white-skinned offspring. An anthropologist, visiting an Arnhem Land mission station at the invitation of a missionary of irreproachable character, asked an aboriginal why his normal full-blood son had a light skin. The father's startling reply was: 'The child's mother works in the missionary's house.'

According to a revised and popular birth theory, intercourse is necessary only as an act of preparation. In itself

842 [833] it is an invitation to the new spirit to come to the mother from the spirit world. Ideas on the birth question are very vague and the time factor is ignored. Wogburra, who had been taught to read and write and had lived amongst white folk for twenty years, told me that his wife was about to give birth to a child, and gossip named Miniji as the father. He intended to spear Miniji. I asked when his wife had last seen Miniji, and he was certain that it had been two years previously, when Miniji left for his tribal country.

849 142 Babies are smoky pink in colour at birth, and mothers smear them with a mixture of ashes and water to hasten the darkening of the skin. From birth the child lies in the sun,

854 [853] and as soon as it can clutch a chunk of red meat it is allowed to suck it. A mother carries her infant under her arm on a thick roll of soft bark, but the child soon learns to sit on her shoulder; it clutches her hair for support and sleeps through

142 a great part of the day. Most babies are curly headed, fat, strong, and contented, but as soon as they start eating bush food they develop distended stomachs and become thin and prone to disease.

855 [595] In the better type of family the utmost affection is shown by all wives toward the children of the husband's other wives, and it is sometimes difficult to say which is the mother.

[853] She does not always suckle it herself, nor does the infant object to a variation. If a mother dies, the care of her children is assured, and I have seen only two children that could be called waifs or strays.

[861] Children are pampered unbelievably and are rarely punished. The most a mother will do when her patience is exhausted is to shake it by the shoulder, shout at it and threaten it with a ghost or a white man. Imitating their

857 elders, the youngsters learn their lessons and make fun for themselves in the hard days of childhood, though their games seem to foreshadow the strenuous adult life ahead of them. Girls play at gathering food, making huts and weaving dilly-bags,